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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION ROUNDUP,
NOVEMBER 8

REF: Almaty 3919

1. (U) This is the seventh in a series of weekly election roundups in advance of Kazakhstan's December 4, 2005 presidential elections. Items were drawn primarily from the local press and media.

President Nazarbayev's Campaign

2. (U) President Nazarbayev continued to participate in a heavy schedule of large public events around the country, involving groups such as students, teachers, academicians, workers, and intelligentsia. On October 28, he addressed the congress of entrepreneurs in Astana and promised to support entrepreneurship, especially small businesses. "It is necessary to continue work on protecting private property. Entrepreneurs must feel confident that business in Kazakhstan is safe and promising. In the next three years the credits extended to small and medium size businesses will amount to 95 billion tenge (\$709 million), which will make it possible to create 200,000 new jobs," the president promised.

3. (U) On October 31, President Nazarbayev addressed more than 300 delegates from around the country at a special congress of the Federation of Trade Unions. In his speech, Nazarbayev outlined the economic and social indicators the government plans to achieve by 2012: GDP per capita will be increased to \$8,000-9,000; individual incomes will be doubled; average wages will be increased up to 70,000 tenge (\$522); social allowances and stipends will be increased by 2-2.5 times; and pensions will be increased by 1.5-2 times. The President also announced that, beginning in 2007, victims of the Semipalatinsk nuclear tests will receive lump sum compensation payments totaling approximately 14 billion tenge (\$104 million). At the end of the congress, the delegates passed a resolution expressing their full support for President Nazarbayev.

4. (U) Nazarbayev spent three days campaigning in South Kazakhstan Oblast. On November 2, he met publicly with representatives of the military and law enforcement in Shymkent to discuss modernization plans. After the meeting, Nazarbayev performed a modeling flight on a ground attack aircraft training system. The same day the president visited the Shymkent Tire Factory, the "Melange" Cotton Fabric Factory, and the Shymkent Central Mosque for Ramadan prayers. On November 3, Nazarbayev visited the Saryagash border district, where he attended a fall agricultural fair. On November 4 Nazarbayev wrapped up his tour by visiting Kentau City.

5. (U) Nazarbayev's Public Reception Office in Almaty (reftel) has reportedly received over 700 requests and complaints, including regarding gas shortages; lack of water supply; problems with electric power supply; and public transportation. All requests and complaints are forwarded to appropriate agencies. The head of Nazarbayev's Almaty election headquarters told the press that some needy residents had received financial aid from the City Social Department as a result of their complaints.

The Opposition

6. (U) "For a Just Kazakhstan" candidate Zharmakhan Tuyakbay held a series of campaign events in the northeast and southern parts of the country. While some events proceeded peacefully, such as in Atbasar and Kostanay, in many other cities there were disturbances. On October 29 in Pavlodar, when FJK activists tried to hold a meeting in the "Kosmos" movie theater they found it occupied by a large crowd of combative young men, many of them drunk, who work at the local aluminum plant owned by Aleksandr Mashkevich, Patoh Shodiev and Alidjon Ibragimov. The police were present but reportedly declined to intervene. On October 30 in Ekibastuz (Pavlodar Oblast), a group of drunken young people tried to disrupt the meeting by yelling, swearing, and trying to provoke fights. The

police present at the meeting reportedly refused to intervene. FJK alleges that the incident was the result

of a meeting the day before between the city akim and the management of city enterprises and organizations. On October 31 in Yesil (Akmola Oblast), Tuyakbay and his team encountered a group of school children at the entrance of the City Culture Center shouting pro-Nazarbayev slogans under the direction of their teachers. Inside the building, another group of young people disrupted the meeting by yelling and tearing down Tuyakbay's campaign posters. Once again, the police reportedly did not intervene. Similar disruptions reportedly occurred in Peremyetnoye, Aktobe, Zhanatas, Lebyazhye, Pavlodar, Georgievka, and Semipalatinsk.

17. (SBU) "Ak Zhol" candidate Alikhan Baymenov also experienced some difficulties during his regional campaign events. A November 1 event in Astana was disrupted when the electoral commission issued a permit for a venue not approved by the akim's office. Baymenov told the press that he viewed the confusion as an intentional effort to disrupt the event. He also complained that the list of approved venues included only places on the outskirts of the city. In a brief conversation on November 3, Baymenov told POEC chief that he had experienced several similar problems with venues, and also with distorted press coverage. In one instance the local television station planted people in the audience who pretended to sleep through Baymenov's speech, filmed them briefly, then the entire group left together.

The Other Candidates

18. (U) "Tagibat" (Green) movement candidate Mels Yeleusizov is conducting a less energetic campaign than the other candidates. Yeleusizov told the press on October 31 that his staff was still preparing his posters and campaign films, and that he did not intend to arrange large public meetings or concerts. His only campaign event to attract news coverage so far was a November 1 visit to the Almaty Center for Social Adaptation of Vagrants, where residents asked him to help with a property expropriation issue.

19. (U) Communist People's Party candidate Yerasyl Abylkasymov started a visit to Atyrau oblast on November 3 by laying a wreath at the Lenin monument. He then met with a small group of teachers at a city school, where he said "I am also a teacher. I know your problems and only I can solve your problems." Abylkasymov told the teachers about his election program, which includes fighting inflation and corruption, redistribution of oil revenues, and the confiscation of enterprises, oil fields and pipelines transferred to foreigners.

Three Candidates Pledge to Observe Fair Competition Rules

10. (U) On November 4, the campaign staffs of Nursultan Nazarbayev, Yerasyl Abylkasymov, and Mels Yeleusizov signed an agreement pledging to observe fair competition rules developed by the CEC. The rules include pledges to follow the Constitution and election legislation, not to use dirty PR, not to bribe the electorate, and not to resort to political radicalism. Zharmakhan Tuyakbay and Alikhan Baymenov refused to sign the agreement. On November 1, Tuyakbay issued a statement explaining that he refused to sign because the rules included no real measures to provide for a fair, free and transparent election. The opposition's previous proposals to amend current election legislation had been rejected. In his address to the CEC on October 31, Baymenov pointed out that a declaration that did not contain specific measures could not provide for a fair and open election.

Daughter of FJK Activist Reported Missing

11. (U) The 14 year-old daughter of Almaty FJK activist Yelena Nikitina disappeared on October 31, according to a November 2 FJK announcement. FJK claims that law enforcement officials visited Nikitina several times from

October 23 to October 29. They allegedly tried to recruit Nikitina to provide information about FJK headquarters' activities. On October 24, unspecified members of "special services" reportedly asked Yelena about her daughter. (Note: Post will follow this situation closely. It is not clear whether foul play is actually involved.

End note.)

Incidents Related to Transport of Campaign Materials

12. (U) FJK has filed a complaint with law enforcement agencies regarding the November 1 seizure by road police in Zyrjanovsk (Eastern Kazakhstan Oblast) of Tuyakbay campaign materials and opposition newspapers (Epokha, Svoboda Slova, Zhuma-Times and Pravda Kazakhstan). The road police reportedly seized the materials without producing a warrant or court ruling. On November 3, a stolen car containing Baymenov campaign materials was found close to Taraz City airport. The police returned the materials to the driver, who said the car had been stolen earlier that day. A bus carrying Tuyakbay campaign materials that was reported missing in Aktobe Oblast on October 27 has been found, along with its passengers. It had broken down.

Print Run of Zhuma-Times Seized

13. (U) On November 3, 12,000 copies of the Zhuma Times opposition weekly were seized in Almaty. The same day the Daur printing house, which prints the weekly, received an order from the Medeu district prosecutor ordering the seizure of the whole print run (100,000 copies). The ruling said that the weekly issue carried an article insulting the president's dignity and honor.

Senate Rejects Request to Punish Senator Battalova

14. (U) At a plenary session on November 3, the Senate examined a motion filed by the Procurator General to punish Senator Zauresh Battalova for conducting an unsanctioned rally in Almaty on October 8. Senate Chairman Abykayev had previously written to the CEC to recommend that Battalova face administrative charges for the Almaty event. The senate recognized Abykayev's recommendation and the CEC's subsequent concurrence as grounded, but declined the Procurator General's motion on the grounds that it was the first charge against Battalova.

CEC Activities

15. (U) On November 2, the CEC held a briefing on the requirements of the election law regarding campaigning - placement of advertisements in media, provision of facilities for candidates to hold their meetings with voters, etc. CEC Chairman Zhumabekov announced that he would be available to meet with the heads of candidates' campaign headquarters twice a week to answer their questions.

16. (U) Due to substantial international interest in the upcoming elections, the CEC has launched a new English-language website at <http://www.election.kz/site/?mod=news&lng=eng &year=2005>. The CEC has invited all candidates to post their election programs on the site.

17. (U) For technical reasons, the CEC has slightly reduced the number of polling stations that will use the e-voting system, CEC Deputy Chairman Kuandyk Turgankulov announced on November 4 in Astana. According to Turgankulov, 18 polling stations out of 1475 have been excluded due to problems with the electric supply.

Ministry of Information Media Monitoring

18. (U) On October 31, the Ministry of Information, Culture and Sports announced the results of its short-term monitoring of coverage of the election campaign by state media. The Ministry monitored Khabar, Kazakhstan TV companies, Kazakh radio, Yegemen Kazakhstan and Kazakhstanskaya Pravda newspapers. It excluded analytical materials and coverage of the incumbent President's regular work that did not include campaigning. The Ministry of Information reported that in general, all state-owned media outlets provided equal coverage of all candidates' campaigns, but the Kazinform agency with two-thirds of its information devoted to President Nazarbayev does not. The Ministry sent a letter to Kazinform with a request to level out its coverage of the candidates'

campaigns.

OSCE Issues First Interim Report

119. (U) On November 2, the ODIHR/OSCE election observation mission issued its first interim report on the results of its observation of the election campaign. It noted a number of shortcomings, such as detention and prosecution of people for organizing and participating in illegal meetings, incidents of illegal restrictions of the freedom of speech, confiscation or forced delays in publication of newspapers, and detention of journalists. The report also criticized recent amendments to the election law as falling short of OSCE standards.

International observers

120. (U) As of November 1, the CEC had accredited 187 foreign observers: 44 from OSCE/ODIHR, 38 from the CIS, 31 from other international organizations, and 74 from foreign countries.

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